

● OPERATIONS CENTER BRIEF ●

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From: AP, W. Times, Wall St. Jnl.

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Controversy at Boston University over USIA Afghan Media Project--

The President of the Association for Education in Journalism said the resignation of the dean of Boston University's school of journalism raises questions about "academic freedom, the integrity of that school and the integrity of journalism." At issue is the Afghan media project, funded by USIA, to train Afghan freedom fighters to report on the Soviet invasion and occupation of their homeland. Faculty members at Boston University said academic standards will be compromised, as the training will be done in Pakistan. The Wall Street Journal, noted the new dean is a refugee from East Germany, "so academic skirmishes should seem like child's play" to him. (Action P/DH)

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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Asides

Banned in Boston?

Boston University won a big U.S. Information Agency contract to train 30 Afghan freedom fighters to use TV cameras to report the war. This will be useful because there's not much footage coming out of the Soviet-occupied country. But some of the communications professors don't like the idea because the training will be not in

Boston, but in "the turmoil of a refugee center awash with secret agents, rival political factions and intense emotions." When the communications dean quit over the plan, President John Silber responded by naming H. Joachim Maitre, a contributor to these pages, as interim dean. He managed to escape from East Germany to the West, so academic skirmishes should seem like child's play.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 22, 1986 / PAGE 5A

Faculty protests plan to teach Afghan rebels

BOSTON (AP) — Boston University's agreement to train Afghan refugees as journalists so they can spread the word of the Soviet invasion that drove them from their country has sparked a fierce dispute among the school's faculty.

To Sen. Gordon J. Humphrey, New Hampshire Republican, who sponsored the bill allocating the money for the program, it's a simple plan: "If we train freedom fighters in the use of cameras to bring out footage, that might help raise international public outrage. It's propaganda in the best sense of the word."

But 10 faculty members at the 1,800-student College of Communication say academic standards would be compromised from the start because the refugees will be trained in Pakistan, near the border of the conflict, rather than at the school.

"The gravest risk," they said in a November letter to Provost Jon Westling, "is that the program would be seen by the outside world and by the American academic community

as not an educational enterprise at all but as a venture in propaganda and counterintelligence."

The university hopes to train up to 30 refugees in Peshawar with a \$180,364 grant from the U.S. Information Agency. King Features Syndicate will distribute the refugees' work with a \$309,696 grant.

In two six-week sessions starting as early as September, the refugees will be taught to use television cameras and other tools to report the war in the closed country occupied by 115,000 Soviet troops. Since the troops entered in 1979 to support the Marxist government against Moslem insurgents, 3 million refugees have crossed into Pakistan.

Afghanistan's charge d'affaires, Rohullah Erfaqui, said the program will interfere in his country's internal affairs and violate international law.

H. Joachim Maitre, an East German defector who spearheaded the project, said the refugees will bring back news that only the most intrepid of Western journalists cover.

Mr. Maitre, a MiG pilot trainee before his defection in 1953, will select students from among candidates chosen by Islamic Unity, a coalition of anti-communist Afghan tribes in exile.

Faculty members said in their letter that proper training "certainly cannot be nurtured in the turmoil of a refugee center awash with secret agents, rival political factions and intense emotions."

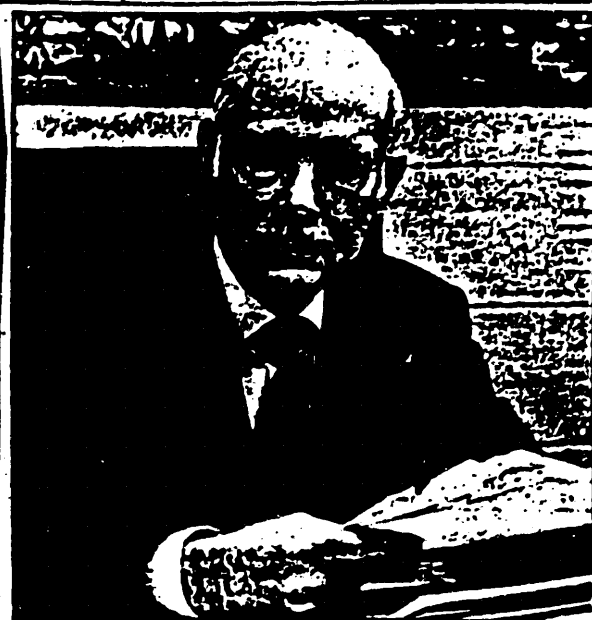
The college submitted a proposal to train the refugees in Boston, but USIA spokeswoman Lesley Vossem said the agency preferred the university plan because "the cultural adjustment might interfere with the refugees' training."

The communications college dean, Bernard S. Redmont, quit in July after refusing to support the university plan and after demoting an associate dean for working on the program without Mr. Redmont's approval.

Mr. Redmont was named dean emeritus and assigned to spend the fall in London supervising a college internship program. He declined comment.

Mr. Maitre was named interim dean by President John Silber on Aug. 12, after his return from a two-week fact-finding trip in Peshawar.

Boston Globe
July 22, 1986



Bernard Redmont objected to journalism program in Pakistan.

Dean at BU resigns following faculty rift

By Richard Higgins
Globe Staff

The dean of Boston University's College of Communication has resigned in the wake of a faculty rift over a proposed BU project to train Afghan refugees as journalists.

Bernard S. Redmont, who resigned earlier this month, declined to give his college's backing to a BU proposal to conduct a journalism program in Peshawar, Pakistan, near Afghanistan.

Last March, he questioned whether academic standards could be upheld "in the turmoil of a volatile refugee center teeming with secret agents, tribal factions and intense emotions."

Other professors said they were concerned that BU might inadvertently become involved in a propaganda effort.

The \$500,000 project is being financed by the US Information Agency. Its goal is to teach the Afghans, most of whom are sympathetic to the mujahedin rebels, to spread "news" about the Soviet Union's "attempt to enslave a brave people who are fighting for freedom," according to BU provost Jon N. Westling.

The BU proposal was developed through the provost's office in conjunction with school president John R. Silber.

The US Information Agency has awarded BU about \$225,000 for the project, which is to be carried out with King Features, BU sources said.

H. Joachimi Maitre, professor of journalism and international relations, was named to instruct the Afghans with professor Henry G. LaRue 2d. Maitre

Communications dean at BU resigns after rift

■ BU

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that Pakistan has refused permission for the project. BU officials insist that the Pakistan location is "still an option."

Redmont and several professors had agreed in principle to teach journalism skills to Afghan refugees, but not in Pakistan. They supported a separate proposal, submitted by the College of Communication, to conduct the program in Boston to ensure "the most rigorous standards of the profession and the highest academic integrity," Redmont told faculty colleagues.

This "would have insulated the program from ... poor logistics and communication, as well as the problems of competing religious, political and tribal factions," he said.

A veteran network television correspondent in Europe, Redmont steps down effective Aug. 1. He will remain a full professor.

Silber also backed Redmont's proposal. Westling said last week that he would have been "pleased" to conduct the program

in Boston if that proposal had won federal funding.

Redmont was backed by most of his own faculty, including the directors of the communication college's three schools.

In a letter to Westling last November, 10 professors said they feared that the provost's proposal might be seen "not as an educational enterprise" and that the school might inadvertently become involved in propaganda or espionage.

"Those of us who opposed it concluded on the basis of decades of experience as practicing journalists that the project had a high likelihood of being ineffective and, at worst, vulnerable to infiltration by intelligence agents or conversion by its sponsors into a propaganda tool," BU associate professor of journalism Bernice Buresh said in an interview.

Westling replied that the critics had no evidence to support their fears and asserted that Boston University would uphold the "principles of free and open exchange of information."

He said that BU's role in the project was solely to "train Af-

ghan refugees in the techniques of modern journalism."

"Understanding of the tragic situation in Afghanistan can be furthered only by improving the ability of the Afghan people to get their story into the news media," he said last week.

"Simply because the possibility exists that a constructive project could be misrepresented by some people for their own ends is not an argument for doing nothing," he said.

The episode began last year when Congress allocated \$500,000 to "promote the development of an independent media service by the Afghan people and to provide for the training of Afghans in media and media-related fields," according to the US Information Agency.

The accepted BU proposal was drafted by associate dean Jasper K. Smith, professors Maitre and LaBrie and Ronald S. Goldman, who was an associate dean until he was relieved of his duties by Redmont in connection with the affair. Goldman now has "no status" at the college, but remains on the BU payroll, Smith said.

Smith said the location of the program won't be decided until

Maitre returns from Pakistan. BU is also exploring conducting the program in West Germany, where it has a campus, if the Pakistan site falls through, according to a reliable BU source.

Smith said that Maitre and LaBrie were professional and sophisticated enough "not to be sucked into propaganda" or into a cover for espionage. "There's nothing hidden about the project's funds, and the CIA has not been involved one bit."

Redmont, a former CBS correspondent in Paris and Moscow, did not mention the Afghan project in his letter to Silber. He said he was resigning "for reasons with which you are familiar."

Silber's response expressed his "regret" at Redmont's resignation, named him dean emeritus and assigned him to spend the fall in London supervising a Journalism Internship program.

Redmont declined to comment when asked if he had been "fired." Westling said Redmont "served with great distinction" and stepped down voluntarily, and that his resignation had "no connection" to the Afghan project.